

Good Stories for Children

By Walt McDougall

SAMUEL AUGUSTUS SMEDLEY GREW RICH BY CAPTURING A BIG ICEBERG

For His Brightness He Earned Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars and Saved His Poor Mother From Losing Her Home Just as She Was About to be Evicted

SAMUEL AUGUSTUS SMEDLEY was the name of a boy who lived with his widowed mother. He never told his middle name to anybody for fear he would be called "Gussie." He had no brothers nor sisters, and, as his mother was very poor, he did all he could to help her. Whenever things were at the very worst he would go to his uncle, Henry Spielmeier, and ask him to help them, but his uncle was a very mean, stingy man, and it hurt him to give them anything. He would sometimes take Sammy fishing with him and let him carry home to his mother the smallest fish, the eels and the crabs that he caught, but he never gave Sammy a nickel, as most uncles do occasionally. Whenever they went fishing he used to sigh and wish very frequently that he could catch a Hippocampus, and when Sammy had asked him what that was he said:

"It's a fish like a horse; one of the rarest and finest of fish, and whoever gets one is lucky ever after."

Sammy always echoed his uncle's wish after that. Yet they caught no hippocampuses mainly because they always fished in fresh water, and those fish live in the sea; but Uncle Henry didn't know that.

WAS OLD ENOUGH TO WORK

One day Mrs. Smedley went to her brother Henry and said: "Sammy is old enough to go to work. Won't you give him a position in your mitten and ear-tab factory, so that he can earn a few dollars every week and help me pay the rent?"

"No," replied Uncle Henry. "I haven't work for all my men now, and it would be months before he could learn enough to be worth three dollars a week to me."

"Can't he be elevator boy in the factory?" she asked.

"No—unless I build an elevator for him, and I will not go to that expense, as all my men are able to walk upstairs."

"Alas, to whom shall I turn?" Mrs. Smedley cried.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Uncle Henry. "I'll give him a lot of ear-tabs and mittens, and he can go out and sell them."

"Who will buy ear-tabs and mittens in summer?" inquired the poor widow, weeping bitterly.

"Plenty of people, if they are cheap enough," he said. "And as he'll get 'em for nothing, he can undersell even me."

So that is how it happened that Sammy, in the late summer, when only coal dealers and plumbers are thinking of cold weather, had to become a peddler of ear-tabs and wooten mittens with orange and blue stripes, a lot of shop-worn, out-of-date goods which his uncle couldn't sell at all. Very hard work it was to plod along country roads and try to induce people who were perspiring by the quart, as they mowed hay or churned butter, to purchase these winter garments, and many a time the tears would start into Sammy's eyes when the heartless farmer folk jeered at him for selling such things when the thermometer was at 86½. But he persisted for many days, and only ceased when he became assured that nobody would buy ear-tabs until snow came. He arrived at last at the seashore, and when he saw the leaping surf he threw down his great bundle and stood staring out over the vast expanse of blue water.

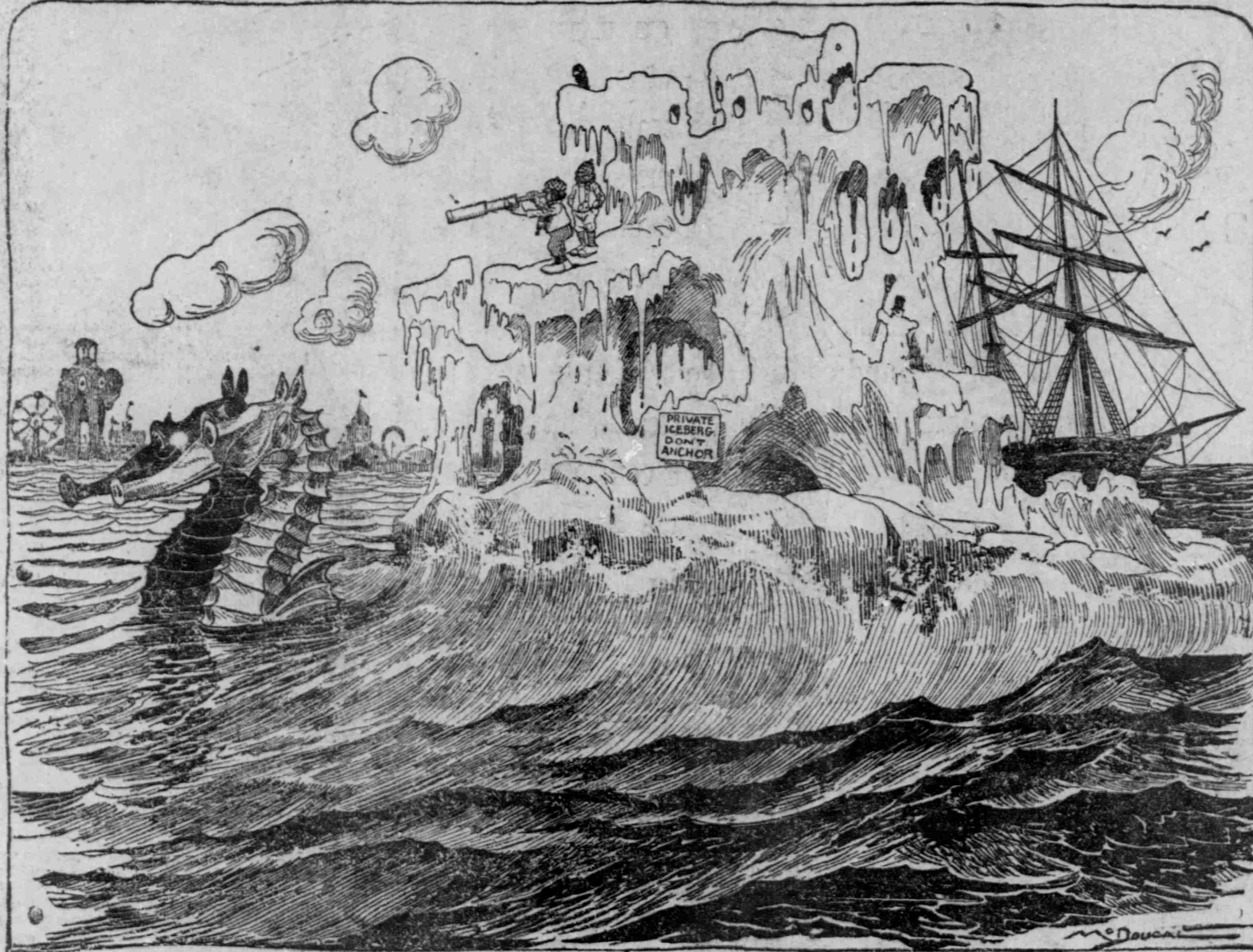
A boy came and asked him who he was. This boy carried a pair of oars over his shoulder and had fish lines in his hand, and the sight of the fish lines set Sammy's heart a-beating. "Are you going fishing?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes," replied the lad. "Do you want to go along?"

HE HASTENED INTO THE BOAT

In less than five minutes Sammy was in a boat with his bundle of ear-tabs and mittens in the stern-thwarts, leaping over the billows, and soon they were hauling in weakfish and grunters two at a time. It was the best fishing Sammy had ever seen, and it was not strange that neither of them noticed that a thick fog had enveloped them until it was impossible to see the shore.

"Hully gee!" suddenly cried George, the fisherman. "We must hustle out o' here quick, or we'll never get home!" He pulled up the anchor and began to row, as he supposed, to shore, but as they had no compass he did not take the proper course, and so in an hour or so, when the fog lifted, they found themselves far out of sight of land. Night soon came, and although George cried because he would lose his supper, Sammy made no complaint, for he had lost so many he could stand it better. He felt that even being adrift was more fun than selling ear-tabs in summer. Soon they fell asleep and were awakened by a loud shout which came from the deck of a great ship that was very near them. They were taken aboard and soon, Sammy's bundle being taken in also, and sent a breeze, came up



BRINGING THE ICEBERG INTO THE PORT

which carried them toward Europe. Three nights later the good ship Skyrocket struck an enormous iceberg at midnight. She ran her bow away up on the ice and stove a hole in her bottom as big as a barn door. All of the passengers got on the iceberg, while the sailors landed provisions in a hurry; but before much could be taken off the ship she suddenly sank in the green waves. Sammy had rescued his precious bundle with great presence of mind. The passengers had plenty of food, and fresh water was there in great abundance, of course, as that is what icebergs are made of. But few had clothes suitable to such a cold resort. Had they possessed a thermometer, I think it would have fallen to about 10 degrees. It seemed like the inside of an ice chest to these people, who, with all their wealth, had to suffer the pangs of cold on this mountain of ice in crash suits.

"Now's my chance," thought Sammy, and he opened his bundle of ear-tabs and mittens. A great shout arose, and the rich but half-frozen passengers began to beg for the all-wool even if very gaudy goods. So great was the clamor that Sammy was compelled to auction off the things, and the people wanted them so badly that they paid two and three hundred dollars for a pair of ear-tabs, and twice that sum for mittens, so that he gathered in something over fifty thousand dollars for the tabs and ninety-six thousand for the mittens, there having been 221 of the former and 160 of the latter in the bundle. Oh, how glad the people were to get even this protection from the bitter cold of the iceberg, and Sammy was quite a hero indeed. He wondered what Uncle Henry would say when he told him about it.

The next day Sammy and George fished off the northern edge of the iceberg, catching many tom-cods and snappers, which went toward feeding the shipwrecked people. They passed the time thus for several days, when one afternoon Sammy pulled in his line and found two strange little fish fast to it by their tails. They bore the strangest resemblance to tiny horses, and when Sammy seized them before they could untwist their tails and showed them to George the latter cried:

"Gosh! They are Hippocampuses! Now you'll always have luck wherever you go!"

"So I have heard my uncle say more than once," said Sammy.

After the little sea-horses had struggled for a few minutes they submitted to Sammy's handling, and in a day or two grew very tame. He kept them

in a pool in a sort of ice cave, and they seemed to enjoy his society, swimming about with heads out of the water and constantly watching him, neighing occasionally in a friendly manner. He noticed that they grew very rapidly, being in four days ten times as large as when he caught them. He fished constantly for more, but with no success, although he caught every other kind of fish in the sea.

The iceberg was very nearly two miles around, and one day, while they were on one side, a big steamer came along and took off all of the wrecked passengers, leaving the two boys on the ice, for the people forgot about them in the pleasure of escaping. When the boys came back they found nobody there, but far off they saw the steamer and they knew what had happened. George was going to cry, but Sammy said:

"Never mind; they've left all of the food, and we are no worse off than before."

"But I heard a man say the iceberg was melting all the time, and some day it was going to turn over," said George.

NEVER SAW A PIECE OF ICE TURN OVER

"I don't believe it," replied Sammy. "I never saw a piece of ice turn over. It melts all the time, of course, but it keeps sinking down into the water just as much as ever, and there isn't enough out of the water to turn over."

And it never did turn over either. All the time they were on it it melted in rivers, but it never sunk up out of the water any farther. Instead it sank a good deal. The Hippocampuses grew and grew as the iceberg floated southward, until they were as large as hippopotamuses, and they were so tame that the boys could ride on their backs. They caught enough fish for themselves, as well as for the boys, and climbed up on the berg to sleep every night like big dogs.

"We're getting further south every day," said George one evening, "and soon the iceberg will melt and we will have to swim for it."

"Not while we have our sea-horses," replied Sammy. "I think they could easily find the shore if we wanted them to."

"Then, why don't we go right off?" asked George, as he looked out toward the sunset. "I think I see land over there now!"

"I do, too," replied Sammy. "I think we are near Long Island, for I heard the captain say that the current sets that way, and that if an iceberg lasted long enough it would fetch up somewhere

about there, but I don't intend to leave the iceberg unless I have to."

"Not even if a ship comes along?"

"No, sir; not even then," said Sammy, emphatically. "I have an idea, and a great one, too!"

He wouldn't reveal what this idea was, and George couldn't guess it in a month. Sammy spent the time teaching the sea-horses to go this way and that at command, and they obeyed his orders beautifully. They were very playful, too, and would gambol like kittens in the great waves that washed the sides of the iceberg. One day one of them dived and came up with an anchor in its mouth, with a long chain attached.

"It's the ship's anchor!" cried George in great excitement. "She must be down in the ice somewhere!" Sammy sent the sea-horses down again, and one of them soon emerged holding the end of a rope, which George recognized as the mainsplines of the sheet-top-gallants. The two Hippocampuses, seeing how pleased Sammy was, tugged mightily at the chain and rope, and soon the boys saw the masts of the ship appear above the water. Then the sea-horses drew her into a sort of cuplike bay, where she lay almost entirely out of the sea. The water ran out of the hole in her bottom in a tremendous torrent, and before morning she was empty and dry, so that the boys could go aboard her. They found that they could patch up the hole with planks if she were further up on the ice, so the sea-horses were set to work again, and when she was high and dry the boys got the carpenter's tools and worked like beavers for a week. They had the satisfaction of making her as watertight as a coconut in six days.

"Hooray!" cried George when the job was done. "Now let's slide her into the water and quit the iceberg right away!"

"No, indeed," said Sammy. "I'll never leave the berg. I've a use for her yet."

George thought that Sammy was crazy from being so long in cold storage, but he was not. He refused to put the Skyrocket into the water, but they lived aboard of her and they had the best of everything—pie, cake, pickles, fruit, candy, nuts, raisins, bananas—in fact, I cannot think of anything they didn't find on board of her, and they ate six meals every day, for they had nothing else to do. George no longer worried about the berg melting, and so he was quite happy. In fact, he was so contented that he used to go tobogganing down the steep slants of the icy mountain for hours at a time.

To Add to His Good Fortune, His Uncle Henry Was Eaten by Cannibals, and Samuel, Much to His Surprise and Gratification, Became a Millionaire

One day, however, something appeared that put a stop to his sport, and that was a large and very hungry polar bear, which had been living away off at the end of the iceberg, where they had never been, which hadn't been able before to get at them because of the steepness of the sides. When the sun had melted the ice sufficiently there was no barrier to keep him away, and so he came prowling around looking for food. George saw him first and uttered a yell of terror, which made Sammy jump in alarm. The bear scented the boys and made for them, but they climbed aboard the ship and closed the hatchways. The bear roamed up and down the deck for a long time, then returned to the ice, where he sat down to watch. Sammy went to the captain's cabin and got a rifle, and then fired through a port-hole. The bullet struck the bear, but only angered him, and then Sammy, looking closer, discovered that his shaggy hide hung so loosely on his body, because he was so starved, that the bullet had not harmed him at all. So he aimed at his heart and fired again. The bear leaped into the air, then, turning a somersault, plunged down the jagged side of the iceberg; but when he was only halfway down to the water a sharp spike of hard ice caught in his loosened hide and stopped him so suddenly that he was turned inside out and fell out of his skin into the sea, leaving a splendid bearskin ten feet long hanging there, which Sammy soon secured.

SAMMY SIGHTS THE LAND

The next morning Sammy saw land to the west when he came on deck, and he awakened George with a loud shout of glee. The ocean current seemed to be carrying them very slowly toward this land, and he got out the telescope to see if there was any well-known landmark by which he could identify the country. As soon as he got the glass adjusted he spied the big wooden elephant, the Ferris wheel and the loop-the-loop at Coney Island, and so he knew that it was America. Now he was in a great hurry to get ashore, and, whistling to the two Hippocampuses, he ordered them to haul the Skyrocket into the water instantly. When that was accomplished he told them to hitch their tails around some projections of the iceberg, and then follow the ship very carefully, so that the iceberg would not go aground. It was wonderful to see how sagaciously these intelligent and well-trained sea-horses obeyed their master, and it only shows what can be done by kindness, for the Hippocampus, as everybody knows, has always been said to be untamable. Sammy sailed the ship into New York Bay by the captain's chart, and when he had anchored hurried on shore to the office of the Knickerhatten Ice Company, where he sold the iceberg for fifty thousand dollars.

He had arrived just at the period of an awful ice famine, and the ice company was so glad to get the berg that they never stopped to have it measured in order to ascertain its weight, but just bought it at once and had it cut up and carried away in their ice wagons before evening. I'll bet, too, that they made an awful lot of money on the transaction, but Sammy was satisfied. He gave half of the money to George at once. Then they went to the ship's owners, Overhaul & Co., and told them that they had saved the Skyrocket. Overhaul & Co. were amazed at the fact, and they told Sammy that he should have twenty-five thousand dollars. But Sammy had been reading the captain's books, and knew that he ought to have half the value of ship and cargo, so he laughed and hired a good sea-lawyer, one of the best of his kind. In the end Overhaul & Co. had to pay him one hundred and ninety-six thousand dollars and seventy-two cents, which he divided with George, and then they each went to his own home very well pleased with the results of their first sea voyage. I never heard of George again, but I suppose he is still spending his share.

SAVED HIS MOTHER FROM EVICTION

When Sammy arrived home he found that the landlord was just putting his mother's furniture into the street, because she could not pay the rent, and he had the great pleasure of instantly buying a splendid house and moving right in while the landlord was looking on. Soon after his Uncle Henry came hurrying over, full of curiosity, and when he heard how Sammy had sold the ear-tabs and mittens I guess it made him crazy with envy, for he immediately sailed away on another ship with an immense bundle of ear-tabs and mittens in hopes of being wrecked on an iceberg also.

But it would indeed be strange if such a thing happened twice. Instead, such was Uncle Henry's luck, the ill-fated ship was stranded on the Red-hot Coast, a part of Central Africa where the cannibal natives wear only smiles and nose rings, and have no use for ear-tabs. He was eaten, with the rest of the passengers, and as, of course, he never returned, Sammy fell heir to all of his wealth, which was immense, and so became a millionaire. Which shows us that if we always try to do our very best, even with ear-tabs in summertime, we may accomplish wonders as Sammy Smedley did.

WALT McDOUGALL

FEAR THAT THE BIG LAKES WILL DISAPPEAR

RESIDENT ROOSEVELT has extended to the Canadian government an invitation to take part in a consultation respecting the waters of the Great Lakes, with a view to arriving at a decision as to what ought to be done to maintain the surface level of those waters at a point high enough to suit the requirements of navigation. It is proposed to appoint three experts to represent the United States in this negotiation—an officer of the Engineer Corps of the Army, a civil engineer versed in the hydraulics of the Great Lakes, and a lawyer of experience in questions of riparian and international law. Canada, if she assents, will designate three competent men to act in her behalf, and the six, after making a thorough investigation of the question, will present reports which are expected to serve as the basis of a treaty.

The main project is to raise the level of Lake Erie by means of a dam or weir placed across the Niagara river. It would be a massive structure of stone and concrete, provided with sluices for disposing

of the surplus water in certain months of the year—especially February, March and April. The most suitable spot for a dam would be just below Tonawanda, N. Y.; but it is more likely that preference will be given to a submerged weir at the foot of the lake, below Buffalo Harbor. Such a structure would consist of 200 feet of fixed weir, with thirteen sluices, 30 feet wide and 24 feet deep, and would cost \$2,200,000. Of course, there would have to be a lock to allow vessels to pass from Lake Erie to the ports on the Niagara river.

It is thought that this amount of money would be well expended in securing a uniform level for Lake Erie, which at the present time varies so much in this respect that the water in the harbors, as at Buffalo and Cleveland, is often of insufficient depth for ships, while the same difficulty occurs from time to time in the channels connecting the lakes, such as the Detroit river, the St. Mary's river and the St. Clair river. There should be a minimum depth of 20 feet at the

"mean low" stage in the channels and in the harbors, whereas frequently it is much less.

Unfortunately, the navigation season is just the time of year when the water is lowest, and so much trouble has arisen from this cause that something has got to be done, the problem being to find a way of maintaining the level at or near high-water stage through the months when ships are using the channels and harbors. Of course, the Great Lakes Commission has figured out the whole business in detail, and declares that the upper lakes serve as reservoirs for storing the surplus water in wet years, thus regulating the supply to some extent.

This is very fortunate, inasmuch as the water supply of the lake system is in some years more than twice as great as it is in other years. Meanwhile evap-

oration is going on all the time, the lakes losing in this way no less than 22,000 cubic feet per second throughout the year, while a quantity of water just about equal runs off through the Niagara river and over the falls. In these two ways the water supply is disposed of, to be replaced by rainfall from a water-shed two and a half times the area of the lakes themselves.

The proposed weir will hold up the level of Lake Erie, preventing it from going below a certain point, while the sluices will be counted upon to carry off any surplus during the wet season. At the same time, there is danger that an exceptional rainfall might (notwithstanding the sluices) raise the level too high, causing the water to back up along the shores and damage property. And if lands were overflowed at any time claims would certainly be made that the dam was responsible for the mischief. Of course, property interests on the Canadian side are involved as well as our own, and this makes the affair one of international importance.